DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 265 578 CS 505 148

AUTHOR Copeland, Gary A.
TITLE Differences in Perception and Appreciation of "Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen" as a Function of Viewing Context.
PUB DATE Mar 84
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (75th, Philadelphia, PA, March 8-11, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Audience Analysis; *Programing (Broadcast); Public Opinion; *Television Research; Television Surveys; *Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS *Audience Response; *MASH (Television Program)

ABSTRACT

A study examined the impact of viewing context on the evaluation of televised content, specifically whether viewers of the final episode of M*A*S*H who watched it at a party evaluated it differently from those who watched it in their usual manner. A group of 181 students, categorized according to the viewing context, were asked to rate program quality, program mood, and program pace, as well as how many times a week (out of a possible 7) they normally watched a M*A*S*H program. The results indicated that the quality of a program seems to be based more on the content of the program and less on the environment in which it is viewed than at first thought. In the area of program quality and mood, context plays no significant part, but program pace seems to be sensitive to the context in which the program is viewed and the frequency with which it is viewed. (Tables of findings are included.) (EL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Differences in Perception and Appreciation of "Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen" as a Function of Viewing Context

ED265578

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

by

Gary A. Copeland

Assistant Professor

Broadcast and Film Communication

University of Alabama

University, Alabama 35468

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gary A. Copeland

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS505148

Differences in Perception and Appreciation of "Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen" as a Function of Viewing Context

The viewing of television has undergone a change since the technology was first introduced to the American public. Television viewing began as a public experience which later underwent a period of privatization. Jeff Greenfield notes the change in viewing patterns:

> We had begun by experiencing television as a more or less communal phenomenon--in bars, in exhibition halls, standing outside hardware stores watching the world series, crowding into the house of a pioneering neighbor. In the early 1950s, by the millions, we took television into our homes and closed the door behind us.[1]

Despite the move to privatization, television viewing usually takes place within a interpersonal/family context.[2] Thus, the concern for interpersonal elements in attempting to assess the impact and role of the media are a legitimate area of inquiry.[3]

Lemish has examined the rules of television viewing in public contexts. Her findings are intriguing both for their resemblance to and divergence from private viewing rules. She suggests four rules for the public viewer of television: 1) the public viewer adjusts to the setting; 2) the public viewer adjusts to other viewers; 3) the public viewer adjusts to the television set; and 4) the public viewer is open for television related social interaction.[4]

The impact of the viewing context on the appreciation of the televised content is an unexamined area. Context would seem to impact on the evaluation of a program's content. The mediated message and the interpersonal contacts should interact to influence the perception of both. This suggests that the evaluation of a particular program would significantly differ for those who view at home in a private context and those who view in a public context.

The Monday night of 28 February 1983 found the largest audience of Americans tuned to a single television program in the history of prime time television. Capping over 150 episodes and 11 years of new show production, M*A*S*H ended the Korean War and sent the officers and enlisted of the 4077th home to the states. According to the Neilsen ratings, M*A*S*H had a 60.3 rating, a 77 share. This translates into approximately 125 million people viewing the final episode.[5]

The festivities of the Korean unit celebrating the end of the war were matched by viewers who celebrated the fictional end of the war with M*A*S*H parties. These parties were held in local bars, college fraternities/sororities, and in private homes.[6] Many people had a choice as to how they wished to experience the viewing of the final episode. Some chose to view the program as they usually did. Others chose to experience the final program as a group experience to be shared with others. This is a report of a study which attempts to assess the perceptual and appreciative differences in quality of the final M*A*S*H episode as a function of the viewing context.

The scheduling of M*A*S*H parties by a number of private and public entities provided an opportunity for a test of the impact of context on the evaluation of program's content. By comparing the responses of

those individuals who viewed M*A*S*H in their normal manner with those individuals who viewed while attending a party allows for the test of the following hypothesis:

H_1: Viewers of the final episode of M*A*S*H who viewed at a party will differ significantly in their evaluation of the program from those who viewed in their normal manner.

METHOD

Data utilized in the analysis reported below were gathered from 181 students--82 males, 93 females, 6 unidentified--attending regularly scheduled classes in one of several departments within the School of Communication at a Southern University. Collection took place the day following the broadcast of "Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen." Of the 181 respondents, 158 (87.3%) had viewed the program with 107 (68.6%) in the regular context and 49 (31.4%) viewing at a M*A*S*H party. Individuals who did not view the final program were excluded from statistical treatment. The questionnaire consisted of the Interview Schedule for Social Interaction as revised by Kelly and Copeland which was not dealt with in this analysis, semantic differentials selected from the activity, potency, and evaluative factors as identified by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum as a means of measuring viewer reaction to the final episode, items which identified viewing environment, and general demographic data.[7]

Dependent Scale Construction

In order to create comparable evaluative dimensions the 21 bipolar adjectives were subjected to factor analysis to create post hoc scales. A preliminary oblique rotation was undertaken of the items to test for

correlated factors. The results indicated that the first and second factors were most closely correlated (.12). The factors were deemed not be significantly correlated and, thus, the factors were amenable to varimax rotation.

Responses to the 21 bipolar adjectives were then subjected to the principle components technique with varimax rotation. A three factor solution accounting for 41.2% of the variance provided the best fit for the data. Any item which loaded higher than .50 on it's main factor and less than .30 on any secondary factor was used to construct the three scales. See Table 1 for the items and their factor loadings. The factors which emerged were 1) program quality, 2) program mood, and 3) program pace. Composite scales using standardized scores were constructed for each of the three factors using the formula $((X_i-x_i)/SD_i*fs_i)$ where X is an item, x is the mean of the item, SD is the standard deviation of the item, and FS is the item's factor score.[8] These values became the dependent variables for subsequent statistical analysis.

* * * *

Table 1 about here

* * * *

Independent Measures

Two independent measures were used in testing the hypothesis. The first factor was the context in which the respondent had viewed the final episode of M*A*S*H. This was operationalized by the question "Did you watch the program as you regularly do or did you attend a M*A*S*H party to view the program?"

Since the decision to attend a M*A*S*H party may have been in some

part related to how well an individual liked the program, to account for this, a covariate was introduced. The covariate was the number of times a week the respondent typically viewed M*A*S*H. Each respondent was asked to, "Circle the number which represents the number of times you view M*A*S*H in a typical week." In the University viewing area, it is possible to watch M*A*S*H a total of seven times a week--one network showing and six syndicated episodes. Respondents were allowed to circle 7 times a week (n=11, 6.1%), 6 times a week (n=8, 4.4%), 5 times a week (n=28, 15.6%), 4 times a week (n=30, 16.7%), 3 times a week (n=24, 13.3%) twice a week (n=24, 13.3%), once a week (n=23, 12.7%), less than once a week (n=32, 17.7%).

Statistical Analysis

Weighted scale scores for each factor were subjected to an analysis of covariance with viewing context as the factor and frequency of viewing as the covariate. Dummy variables were created for the factor and a series of multiple regressions were performed using the dummy variables and the covariate as the predictor variables of the three dependent scales scores. The computed r^2 provided by the SPSS subprogram REGRESSION were used to construct an analysis of covariance table by hand for each of the three factor scales. Criterion level was set at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

The hypothesis predicts significant differences will exist between the two viewing groups. The results of the analysis of covariance suggests that the impact of context on evaluation of televised content is not simple.

The first dimension of program viewing analyzed was program

quality. The analysis of covariance (see Table 2) indicates no significant interaction between the factor and the covariate and that both the saturated and additive models are not significant. When context is controlled, frequency of viewing produces a significant F value ($F_{1,154}$=6.1321, p<.05). Examination of the r suggested a positive relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable.

* * * *

Table 2 about here

* * * *

The second dimension, program mood, seems to be unaffected by either context or frequency of viewing. No significant F ratios emerged (see Table 3).

* * * *

Table 3 about here

* * * *

Where the second dimension was insensitive to the various conditions examined, the third dimension, program pace, was sensitive. Except for a nonsignificant F for the interaction term, all other F ratios proved to be significant (see Table 4). Both the saturated ($F_{3,154}$=4.6732, p<.05) and the additive model ($F_{2,154}$=6.7351, p<.01) proved to be significant. Breakout of the additive model indicated that both the factor ($F_{1,154}$=4.8272, p<.05) and the covariate ($F_{1,154}$=5.3514, p<.05) were significant. Examination of the means indicated that those individuals who attended the party saw the program as being significantly more active than those who viewed in their regular context. A negative relationship between frequency of viewing and activity was also noted.

* * * *

Table 4 about here

* * * *

DISCUSSION

Similar to viewing rules, public viewing does appear to have some limited impact on viewer's appreciation of a television program's content. Not surprisingly, those people who watch M*A*S*H frequently find the program to be significantly better than those who viewed infrequently. The better the program the more likely s/he will be a frequent viewer. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the viewing context appears not to have an effect on viewer's evaluation of the quality of the program.

The mood of a program seems unaffected by either viewing context or by the frequency of viewing. This seems to be at variance with the intuitive idea that the conviviality of the environment would interact with the program content elevating both the program's and viewer's mood.

The final function, program pace, was the only evaluative dimension which provides support for the hypothesis. Program pace seems to be affected by both the viewing context and the frequency with which the program is viewed. Frequent viewers found the final episode of M*A*S*H to be slower in pace than did the less frequent. Frequent M*A*S*H viewers may have seen the extended plot and final goodbyes to be much slower than the usual 30 minute episodes. The extended length--five times normal--may have made the program seem slower to frequent viewers of the program who expect an episode to conclude in 30 minutes. Party attenders found the pace to be faster than regular viewers. The faster pace may be due to party attenders ability to engage in party/social activities which would help to keep the

perceived pace of the program up. One newspaper account of M*A*S*H parties in New York City noted that during commercial breaks M*A*S*H trivia contests, costume judging, and other activities took place.[9]

Examination of the empirical data suggests only very limited support for the research hypothesis. The context in which a program is viewed seems to have very little impact on the evaluation of the program except in the sense of the show's pace. The viewing context appears to have no impact on the evaluation of a program's quality or mood.

The unusual nature of this particular program may also have affected the results. Since this was the highly touted denouement, people in both environments were more likely to pay attention to the episode than they probably would a traditional episode. The partial attention that most viewers give to episodic television may not have been as prevalent in this instance. Additionally, preconceived ideas or a set of expectations about the final episode may have impacted on the evaluation of "Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen" in a manner inconsistent with regular television programs.

The usual precautions against over generalizing must be made. The sample was composed of students and this homogeneity may add some confounding to the results. However, this research provides a starting point for the investigation of the evaluation of program content in various contexts. An area which seems particularly well suited for further examination is the evaluative difference in the viewing of televised sporting events in group settings (e.g., in bars) versus at home.

In summary, the quality of a program seems to be based more on the content of the program and less on the environment in which it is viewed than at first thought. The present study suggests that in the area of

program quality and mood, context plays no significant part. Program pace seems to be sensitive to the context in which the program is viewed.

Endnotes

[1]Jeff Greenfield, Television: The First Fifty Years (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), pp. 18-20.

[2]Cf. James Lull, "Family Communication Patterns and the Social Uses of Television," Communication Research, 7:319-34 (1980); James Lull, "How Families Select Television: A Mass-Observational Study," Journal of Broadcasting, 26:801-11 (1982); and Thomas R. Lindlof and Gary A. Copeland, "Television Rules and Prepartum New Families," in Michael Burgoon (ed.), Communication Yearbook 6 (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982).

[3]Steven H. Chaffee, "The Interpersonal Context of Mass Communication," in F. Gerald Kline and Phillip J. Tichenor (ed.), Current Perspectives in Mass Communication Research (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), pp. 95-120; and Gary Gumpart and Robert Cathcart (eds.), Inter/Media: Interpersonal Communication in a Media World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[4]Dafna Lemish, "The Rules of Viewing Television in Public Places," Journal of Broadcasting, 26:761-79 (1982).

[5]"Finale of M*A*S*H Draws Record Numbers of Viewers," New York Times, March 3, 1983, p. C17.

[6]Cf. "'M*A*S*H' Parties Across Nation," San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 28, 1983, p. 3; Frank Donze and Rick Rober, "'M*A*S*H' Parting Brings War Stories from Partying Fans," The New Orleans Times-Picayune, p. 1; and Robert D. McFadden, "'M*A*S*H' Farewells mix Fun with Nostalgia," New York Times, March 1, 1983, p. B1

[7]Lynne Kelly and Gary A. Copeland, "A Comparison of the Availability and Adequacy of Relationships of Reticent and Non-reticent Persons," a paper presented to the International Communication Association, Dallas,

1973; and Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957), pp. 44-6.

[8]Jae-on Kim, "Factor Analysis," in Norman H. Nie et al., Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), pp. 487-89.

[9]McFadden, op cit.

TABLE 1

Factor Loadings for Three Viewing Dimensions

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Bad-Good	.84859	.00610	.05983
Successful-Unsuccessful	.72417	-.04378	.01585
Interesting-Boring	.81886	-.09112	-.03096
Fast-Slow	.52805	.12676	.14143
Relaxed-Tense	.01698	.59209	-.19208
Constrained-Free	.12780	.58427	.01307
Easy-Difficult	.19104	.70571	-.08974
Excitable-Calm	.08281	-.05404	.77873
Passive-Active	-.02197	-.05324	.79886

TABLE 2

Analysis of Covariance for Program Quality

Model	Sum of Squares	df	F
Saturated	.04142	3	2.2181
Additive	.04136	2	3.3223
Context adjusted for frequency	.00005	1	.0080
Frequency adjusted for context	.03817	1	6.1321*
Interaction	.00006	1	.0096
Error	.95858	154	

*Significant beyond .05.

TABLE 3

Analysis of Covariance for Program Mood

Model	Sum of Squares	df	F
Saturated	.00329	3	.1694
Additive	.00292	2	.2256
Context adjusted for frequency	.00137	1	.2117
Frequency adjusted for context	.00224	1	.3461
Interaction	.00037	1	.0572
Error	.99671	154	

TABLE 4

Analysis of Covariance of Program Pace

Model	Sum of Squares	df	F
Saturated	.08344	3	4.6732**
Additive	.08017	2	6.7351**
Context adjusted for frequency	.02873	1	4.8272*
Frequency adjusted for context	.03185	1	5.3514*
Interaction	.00327	1	.5494
Error	.91656	154	

*Significant at .05.

**Significant at .01.